

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #2973/01 2880902
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 150902Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3651
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 2848
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 9541
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 2974
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3646
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2880
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0925
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3610
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0475
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0943
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 7522
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 4969
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 9880
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4028
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 5973
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8154
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002973

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Secretary Rice to Israel, West Bank, October 14-18, 2007

SIPDIS

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that on Sunday Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice met with PM Ehud Olmert, and that she is scheduled to meet with PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah today. The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz quoted sources in the Prime Minister's Bureau as saying that Secretary Rice has no intention of imposing on Israel "anything that will not be acceptable to it." Ha'aretz quoted Olmert as saying during his meeting with Rice: "I would very much like for there to be a joint declaration at the summit, but the Palestinians also know that this has never been a precondition." Leading media reported that he also reiterated that the diplomatic process must follow the Roadmap. Ha'aretz reported that Palestinian sources expect Rice to raise in her meeting with Chairman Abbas, coalition problems faced by Olmert's government and that the mention of a timetable or core issues -- refugees, Jerusalem, borders -- will result in the government's fall. The same sources were quoted as saying that the Palestinians will ask Rice to press Israel to agree on a detailed statement on core issues for the Annapolis meeting. The Palestinians are also expected to raise two other issues: Israel's decision to expropriate land for E-1 development, and the decision to resume excavations near the Temple Mount (it has been temporarily blocked by a parliamentary maneuver).

Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday Rice met with Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Industry and Trade Minister Eli Yishai, and Finance Minister Roni Bar-On -- all of whom warned against focusing on the core issues. "The Israeli public feels that the concessions are only getting bigger from one summit to another," Yishai told Rice. "From our point of view, any discussion on Jerusalem is out of the question and any agreements on the core issues will mean the fall of the government," he warned. However, leading media reported that Secretary Rice was adamant in her position. "We have rejected this

SIPDIS

approach for decades," she was quoted as saying. "Decisions must be made without running away from the issues. Only dealing with the core issues will bolster the diplomatic process." The Secretary of State also declared: "The time has come for a Palestinian state. I agree that the partners are weak, but we must bolster them." Barak informed Rice that a permanent roadblock on the road connecting Bethlehem and Hebron will be dismantled. The Defense Minister also told Rice that the PA has still not completed the deployment of 500 Palestinian police officers in Nablus, even though they received permission to do so during her previous visit to the region. Barak reiterated that the ability of Israel to operate freely in security matters in the West Bank is a basic principle that must be protected.

Speaking to the cabinet on Sunday, Olmert said that his decision to appoint FM Tzipi Livni as the head of the negotiating team with the Palestinians came after "I was convinced that it is necessary to include a senior politician in the negotiations." Olmert was quoted as saying that his chief of staff, Yoram Turbowicz, who had served as the head of the negotiating team, had suggested Livni, "emphasizing the fact that if the Palestinian head of negotiators is Abu Ala [former prime minister Ahmed Qurei], then it is appropriate that the Israeli side will also be represented by a senior government figure." Olmert told the cabinet that "we are very much interested in the basis of the declaration being approved by the relevant persons in Israel and among the Palestinians, with subsequent talks about the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state next to Israel." The PM spoke out against a timetable for the negotiations, adding that "I and others believe that such a timetable causes more obstacles." Ha'aretz reported that for her part, Livni is concerned that a crisis in the talks may develop in the coming weeks as expectations on the part of both the Palestinians and the international community are too high. The popular, pluralist Maariv quoted Israeli political sources as saying that Livni's appointment is a "honey trap."

Ha'aretz reported that senior Japanese diplomats told Ha'aretz last week that Japan has recently requested Washington and Jerusalem to allow it to participate in the Annapolis meeting. Ha'aretz quoted sources at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem as saying they were inclined to support Japan's request.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post and other media reported that last week settlers broke talks with Defense Minister Barak's office over the possible voluntary evacuation of some

unauthorized outposts. The settlers are angered by their belief that Barak has halted all new construction plans in the West Bank.

All media covered -- banners in all media outlets, except the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot -- an order given on Sunday to the police by Attorney General Menachem Mazuz to open a third investigation against PM Ehud Olmert. The latest probe, which covers four different affairs, relates to Olmert's tenure as industry and trade minister in 2003-2005 under then PM Ariel Sharon.

On Sunday various politicians demanded that Olmert suspend himself due to the plethora of criminal investigations against him. The media reported that Olmert called the investigations "unnecessary."

Ha'aretz reported that sources in the defense establishment told the newspaper that Israel has recently agreed to grant West Bank resident status to some 5,000 people who seek family reunification. The sources explained that the recipients had asked to be recognized as West Bank residents in the past. The sources were quoted as saying that the decision to approve their request was part of a goodwill, however, the approval is a one-off incident and does not represent a renewal of the family-reunification mechanism Israel halted in 2001, following the outbreak of the second Intifada.

All media reported that on Sunday the GOI denied Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat's report that the two IDF soldiers abducted by Hizbullah in July 2006 were transferred to Iran. Leading media quoted Ali Nourizadeh, the Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat journalist who published the report, as saying that "Israelis will be surprised when the prisoner swap is formed." Yediot Aharonot's lead story is about a trip by MIA Ron Arad's daughter to Berlin to try to prevent the release of the Iranian terrorist Kazem Darabi.

Maariv quoted IDF reserve officers involved in the preparation of a possible war with Syria as saying that the IAF has no real answer to the Syrian Army's medium- and long-range missile batteries, and that the Israeli home front is not prepared for a massive rocket attack. The newspaper cited an official IDF response that this is the unfounded view of one or two reserve officers.

The Jerusalem Post reported that PA officials told the newspaper on Sunday that the Egyptian authorities have released Nahro Massoud, a top Hamas operative wanted by the PA and Israel for his involvement in terror attacks over the past few years.

Maariv ran a feature about Jewish-American NASA astronaut Geoffrey Hoffman, who will soon visit Israel.

Secretary Rice to Israel, West Bank, October 14-18, 2007:

SIPDIS

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Rice's mission in the region this week is almost impossible. She must bridge the Palestinians' rigid demands and has to defuse their call to draft a detailed agreement before the Annapolis conference. Back in Jerusalem, she has to be mindful of Olmert's threats to disband the coalition if he is pressured into making concessions."

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[The President of the US] has a clear interest in seeing the process succeed, and he is holding carrots for the more flexible of the sides and a stick for the recalcitrant."

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized: "This time [Secretary Rice] is coming to reap achievements, despite the fact that she outwardly reiterates that she does not expect a breakthrough."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Any candidate for leader of the free world has the duty to explain how they would do so, not least to those members of their own party who have become blind to the most urgent global threats to everything

they claim to believe in."

Block Quotes:

II. "A Shadow Negotiator"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (10/15): "The offer Olmert is making to Livni is simple enough. Instead of warning against pitfalls, she will now have to lead the troops and avoid them. That way, Livni will be forced to remain committed to a future agreement and share the blame in case the talks fail to produce that agreement. The Premier gains from Livni's appointment in two additional respects. It will help him both with the Palestinians and with the Americans. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who has so far had to deal with a reluctant Olmert and an eager Livni, will now have to confront her good friend, and say: 'Tzipi, your positions are non-starters and they will lead nowhere.' Rice's mission in the region this week is almost impossible. She must bridge the Palestinians' rigid demands and has to defuse their call to draft a detailed agreement before the Annapolis conference. Back in Jerusalem, she has to be mindful of Olmert's threats to disband the coalition if he is pressured into making concessions.... The only problem is that Olmert will never allow Livni to succeed and be portrayed as the great peacemaker. This means he and Abbas will have to engage in separate, secret talks. It is within this sort of framework that the big decision will be made."

II. Only Bush Can"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in Ha'aretz (10/15): "Since the outbreak of the second Intifada seven years ago Israelis and Palestinians have not been this close to a peace agreement. The failure of violence and the disappointment with unilateralism have brought the two sides back to the negotiating table. Yet ... Israelis and Palestinians are in need of an active mediator. The President of the United States is not only a counselor-mediator. He has a clear interest in seeing the process succeed, and he is holding carrots for the more flexible of the sides and a stick for the recalcitrant.... Israeli and Arab leaders find it much easier to agree to the proposals of the American mediator than to 'surrender' to each other's demands.... In essence, Bush already formulated his mediating document three years ago.... All that Bush must do now is to add a short paragraph to the letter [he sent former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in April 2004]: 'Israel will give the Palestinians a suitable territorial equivalent in return for the settlement blocs; the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem will be part of Palestine; the two sides will reach a detailed agreement on the exchange of territories; a special regime will be established in Jerusalem's Old City; a detailed agreement on all these issues, including the question of the refugees, will be reached with the help of the United States by the end of 2008.' He should wrap this up nicely with an international aid package that includes economic and security assurances and add a few words about the kind of treatment that awaits the side that refuses to sign the letter-document. If Bush is not willing to put such a document on the table, then it is truly best that he not send out invitations to Annapolis."

III. "Rice's Pressure"

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (10/15): "Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has arrived in this region to complete the preparations for the conference that will take place next month in Annapolis. This time she is coming to reap achievements, despite the fact that she outwardly reiterates that she does not expect a breakthrough ... Prime Minister Olmert who is willing to withdraw from Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] and Jerusalem is not folding at the moment to Washington's pressure.... [Shas party leader and cabinet minister Eli] Yishai believes that [by focusing on general issues] the diplomatic matters can be bypassed in the agenda. But the Palestinians are still adhering to diplomatic issues. The question is where the US Secretary of State will position herself -- on the Palestinian or the Israeli side? This is no simple matter."

IV. "Who's Naive Now?"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (10/15):
"As Democrats, it is hardly surprising that Clinton and Obama are opposed to giving President George Bush a blank check on anything, including a confrontation with Iran. But they seem to have nothing to say to those many of their supporters who are much more concerned about Bush than about Ahmadinejad. Whenever the two leading Democratic candidate start down the road of sanctioning Tehran -- to say nothing of military action or helping the Iranian people rid themselves of a hated regime - they are yanked back into a hyper-pacifist position by the ostrich wing of their party. Perhaps all this can be dismissed as a function of the politics of primaries, in which each party's more extreme wing tends to flex its muscles. Yet, what is more difficult to shrug off is how Clinton explained her latest position of supporting talks with Tehran.... However much Americans distrust Bush, they -- along with Europeans, Israelis, and free peoples everywhere -- understand that the Iranian regime is a menace that must be stopped. Any candidate for leader of the free world has the duty to explain how they would do so, not least to those members of their own party who have become blind to the most urgent global threats to everything they claim to believe in."

JONES